



ZECHARIAH

Read Zechariah 1

Zechariah the prophet was sent to warn the people of Judah not to ignore the word of the Lord as their ancestors had done. He was also commissioned to console the people with visions promising restoration of what the Babylonians had destroyed.

Reflect: Our sins may cause terrible suffering, but God is always ready to forgive and renew.

Pray: I ask God to teach me not to despair over what I may have lost, but to hope in God's ever-creative love.

Act: I will help to restore dignity and a home for a family by volunteering for an organization like Habitat for Humanity.

Israel Urged to Repent

1 In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berechiah son of Iddo, saying: ² The LORD was very angry with your ancestors. ³ Therefore say to them, Thus says the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. ⁴ Do not be like your ancestors, to whom the former prophets proclaimed, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, Return from your evil ways and from your evil deeds." But they did not hear or heed me, says the LORD. ⁵ Your ancestors, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? ⁶ But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your ancestors? So they repented and said, "The LORD of hosts has dealt with us according to our ways and deeds, just as he planned to do."

First Vision: The Horsemen

⁷ On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, the month of Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berechiah son of Iddo; and Zechariah^a said, ⁸ In the night I saw a man riding on a red horse! He was standing among the myrtle trees in the glen; and behind him were red, sorrel, and white horses. ⁹ Then I said, "What are these, my lord?" The angel who talked with me said to me, "I will show you what they are." ¹⁰ So the man

^a Heb and he

who was standing among the myrtle trees answered, “They are those whom the LORD has sent to patrol the earth.” ¹¹ Then they spoke to the angel of the LORD who was standing among the myrtle trees, “We have patrolled the earth, and lo, the whole earth remains at peace.” ¹² Then the angel of the LORD said, “O LORD of hosts, how long will you withhold mercy from Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which you have been angry these seventy years?” ¹³ Then the LORD replied with gracious and comforting words to the angel who talked with me. ¹⁴ So the angel who talked with me said to me, Proclaim this message: Thus says the LORD of hosts; I am very jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion. ¹⁵ And I am extremely angry with the nations that are at ease; for while I was only a little angry, they made the disaster worse. ¹⁶ Therefore, thus says the LORD, I have returned to Jerusalem with compassion; my house shall be

built in it, says the LORD of hosts, and the measuring line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem. ¹⁷ Proclaim further: Thus says the LORD of hosts: My cities shall again overflow with prosperity; the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.

Second Vision: The Horns and the Smiths

¹⁸^a And I looked up and saw four horns. ¹⁹ I asked the angel who talked with me, “What are these?” And he answered me, “These are the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.” ²⁰ Then the LORD showed me four blacksmiths. ²¹ And I asked, “What are they coming to do?” He answered, “These are the horns that scattered Judah, so that no head could be raised; but these have come to terrify them, to strike down the horns of the nations that lifted up their horns against the land of Judah to scatter its people.”^b

Read Zechariah 2

The prophet’s visions continue with the same message: God loves Jerusalem and its people. God will punish those who destroyed this holy city. God calls all its people to return and rejoice, because God is with them.

Reflect: Even in the greatest disaster, God remains with us. Even if God is hidden, we must not lose hope.

Pray: Ask God to open your eyes to see God’s loving presence everywhere: in the people with whom you live, in the beauty of nature, in the depths of your own heart.

Act: Resolve to treat everyone and everything with care and respect today, aware of God’s presence hidden in them.

Third Vision: The Man with a Measuring Line

²^c I looked up and saw a man with a measuring line in his hand. ² Then I asked, “Where are you going?” He answered me, “To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and what is its length.” ³ Then the angel who talked with me came forward, and another angel came forward to meet him, ⁴ and said to him, “Run, say to that young man: Jerusalem shall be inhabited like villages without walls, because of the multitude of people and animals in it. ⁵ For I will be a wall of fire all around it, says the LORD, and I will be the glory within it.”

Interlude: An Appeal to the Exiles

⁶ Up, up! Flee from the land of the north, says the LORD; for I have spread you abroad like the four winds of heaven, says the LORD. ⁷ Up! Escape to Zion, you that live with daughter Babylon. ⁸ For thus said the LORD of hosts (after his glory^d sent me) regarding the nations that plundered you: Truly, one who touches you touches the apple of my eye.^e ⁹ See now, I am going to raise^f my hand against them, and they shall become plunder for their own slaves. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me. ¹⁰ Sing and rejoice, O daughter Zion! For lo, I will come and dwell in your midst, says the LORD. ¹¹ Many nations shall join themselves to the LORD on that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in your midst. And you shall know that the LORD

^a Ch 2.1 in Heb

^b Heb *it*

^c Ch 2.5 in Heb

^d Cn: Heb *after glory he*

^e Heb *his eye*

^f Or *wave*

of hosts has sent me to you. ¹² The LORD will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem.

¹³ Be silent, all people, before the LORD; for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.

Read Zechariah 3

The prophet sees Joshua, the high priest, clothed in the guilt of all the people. Just as Joshua is stripped of his filthy clothes and dressed in clean and beautiful garments, so the people will be cleansed of their guilt and return to their land.

Reflect: We sometimes fail to see our responsibility for the wrongs that our society commits.

Pray: Pray that God will free us from the sins we commit as a whole people and clothe us with compassion and love.

Act: Write to your senators and representatives and urge them to pass legislation to help those in need and to bring peace to the world.

Read Zechariah 4

Zechariah's visions continue as he sees a golden menorah and two olive trees to provide oil for its lamps. Twice he asks for an explanation. The angel tells him that the olive trees are the two anointed of the Lord: Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the governor, who will finish the building of the temple. The angel also explains that the seven facets of the stone set before Joshua (3:9) are the eyes of the Lord watching the whole earth.

Reflect: We are anointed as Christians; does the oil of our good works feed the lamp of God?

Pray: Lord, you taught Zerubbabel that he could act only in the spirit of the Lord. Teach us to trust your spirit and to have the courage to act on your inspiration.

Fourth Vision: Joshua and Satan

3 Then he showed me the high priest Joshua standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan^a standing at his right hand to accuse him. ² And the LORD said to Satan,^a "The LORD rebuke you, O Satan!^a The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this man a brand plucked from the fire?" ³ Now Joshua was dressed with filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. ⁴ The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes." And to him he said, "See, I have taken your guilt away from you, and I will clothe you with festal apparel." ⁵ And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with the apparel; and the angel of the LORD was standing by.

⁶ Then the angel of the LORD assured Joshua, saying ⁷ "Thus says the LORD of hosts: If you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements, then you shall rule my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you the right of access among those who are standing here. ⁸ Now listen, Joshua, high priest, you and your colleagues who sit before you! For they are an omen of things to come: I am going to bring my servant the Branch. ⁹ For on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with seven facets, I will engrave its inscription, says the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the guilt of this land in a single day. ¹⁰ On that day, says the LORD of hosts, you shall invite each other to come under your vine and fig tree."

Fifth Vision: The Lampstand and Olive Trees

4 The angel who talked with me came again, and wakened me, as one is wakened from sleep. ² He said to me, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it; there are seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it. ³ And by it there are two olive trees, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left." ⁴ I said to the angel who talked with me, "What are these, my lord?" ⁵ Then the angel who talked with me answered me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord." ⁶ He said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the LORD of hosts. ⁷ What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall be-

^a Or the Accuser; Heb the Adversary

Act: I will strive to be aware of the Spirit of God strengthening me and urging me to kindness toward others.

Read Zechariah 5

Zechariah's visions become even more fantastic: he sees a scroll the size of the portico of Solomon's temple and a bushel basket with a woman sitting inside. The scroll represents the curses coming upon thieves and liars. The woman in the basket represents the people's wickedness that is removed from them and banished to Babylon.

Reflect: What are the consequences of my sins? Can I imagine God lifting their weight off me and carrying them away so they will never afflict me again?

Pray: Ask God to grant you the gift of repentance for your sins and to help you believe in the power of God's forgiveness.

Act: Seek out someone whom you have offended and be reconciled.

come a plain; and he shall bring out the top stone amid shouts of 'Grace, grace to it!'"

8 Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁹ "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. ¹⁰ For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel.

"These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range through the whole earth." ¹¹ Then I said to him, "What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?" ¹² And a second time I said to him, "What are these two branches of the olive trees, which pour out the oil^a through the two golden pipes?" ¹³ He said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord." ¹⁴ Then he said, "These are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth."

Sixth Vision: The Flying Scroll

5 Again I looked up and saw a flying scroll. ² And he said to me, "What do you see?" I answered, "I see a flying scroll; its length is twenty cubits, and its width ten cubits." ³ Then he said to me, "This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole land; for everyone who steals shall be cut off according to the writing on one side, and everyone who swears falsely^b shall be cut off according to the writing on the other side. ⁴ I have sent it out, says the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter the house of the thief, and the house of anyone who swears falsely by my name; and it shall abide in that house and consume it, both timber and stones."

Seventh Vision: The Woman in a Basket

⁵ Then the angel who talked with me came forward and said to me, "Look up and see what this is that is coming out." ⁶ I said, "What is it?" He said, "This is a basket^c coming out." And he said, "This is their iniquity^d in all the land." ⁷ Then a leaden cover was lifted, and there was a woman sitting in the basket!^c ⁸ And he said, "This is Wickedness." So he thrust her back into the basket,^c and pressed the leaden weight down on its mouth. ⁹ Then I looked up and saw two women coming forward. The wind was in their wings; they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the basket^c between earth and sky. ¹⁰ Then I said to the angel who talked with me, "Where are they taking the basket?"^c ¹¹ He said to me, "To the land of Shinar, to build a house for it; and when this is prepared, they will set the basket^c down there on its base."

^a Cn: Heb *gold*

^b The word *falsely* added from verse 4

^c Heb *ephah*

^d Gk Compare Syr: Heb *their eye*

Read Zechariah 6

The eighth vision completes the first. The warhorses go out to patrol the earth, but God has purified the land and conquered the evil that threatened it. The high priest Joshua (and perhaps the governor Zerubbabel) will be given authority and people from faraway places will come to help rebuild the temple.

Reflect: What can I do to still the warhorses within me? How do I welcome those who come from far off to pray and work with me?

Pray: Ask God to give us hearts open to making peace at home and throughout the world.

Act: Welcome all those who come to help you, even if their ways are not your ways.

Eighth Vision: Four Chariots

6 And again I looked up and saw four chariots coming out from between two mountains—mountains of bronze. ² The first chariot had red horses, the second chariot black horses, ³ the third chariot white horses, and the fourth chariot dappled gray^a horses. ⁴ Then I said to the angel who talked with me, “What are these, my lord?” ⁵ The angel answered me, “These are the four winds^b of heaven going out, after presenting themselves before the Lord of all the earth. ⁶ The chariot with the black horses goes toward the north country, the white ones go toward the west country,^c and the dappled ones go toward the south country.” ⁷ When the steeds came out, they were impatient to get off and patrol the earth. And he said, “Go, patrol the earth.” So they patrolled the earth. ⁸ Then he cried out to me, “Lo, those who go toward the north country have set my spirit at rest in the north country.”

The Coronation of the Branch

⁹ The word of the LORD came to me: ¹⁰ Collect silver and gold^d from the exiles—from Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah—who have arrived from Babylon; and go the same day to the house of Josiah son of Zephaniah. ¹¹ Take the silver and gold and make a crown,^e and set it on the head of the high priest Joshua son of Jehozadak; ¹² say to him: Thus says the LORD of hosts: Here is a man whose name is Branch: for he shall branch out in his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD. ¹³ It is he that shall build the temple of the LORD; he shall bear royal honor, and shall sit upon his throne and rule. There shall be a priest by his throne, with peaceful understanding between the two of them. ¹⁴ And the crown^f shall be in the care of Heldai,^g Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Josiah^h son of Zephaniah, as a memorial in the temple of the LORD.

¹⁵ Those who are far off shall come and help to build the temple of the LORD; and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. This will happen if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God.

Hypocritical Fasting Condemned

7 In the fourth year of King Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, which is Chislev. ² Now the people of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regem-melech and their men, to entreat the favor of the LORD, ³ and to ask the priests of the house of the LORD of hosts and the prophets, “Should I mourn and practice abstinence in the fifth month, as I have done for so many years?” ⁴ Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me: ⁵ Say

^a Compare Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Or spirits

^c Cn: Heb go after them

^d Cn Compare verse 11: Heb lacks silver and gold

^e Gk Mss Syr Tg: Heb crowns

^f Gk Syr: Heb crowns

^g Syr Compare verse 10: Heb Helem

^h Syr Compare verse 10: Heb Hen

Read Zechariah 7

The people ask if they should continue fasting on special days to mourn over the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. God warns that they have neglected the true purpose of fasting: honoring the demands of social justice.

Reflect: Who are the people in need in my city or neighborhood? What do I have that I can share? How can I make the best use of my resources to help others?

Pray: Ask God to open your eyes to see the suffering of others and to give you the courage and will to aid them.

Act: Resolve to fast from some food or entertainment and donate the money saved to a local relief agency in order to help someone in need.

Read Zechariah 8

God loves Jerusalem passionately and wants to restore the happiness of its people. The disastrous consequences of their sins are ended; they must now live in honesty as God's own representatives to the world.

Reflect: Has anyone ever said to me, "I can see by your life that God is with you; show me how to share in that joy"?

Pray: Ask God to fill every corner of your life and help you bear joyful witness to God's goodness.

Act: Designate as a reminder of God's presence some specific place or thing that you see frequently and turn your heart to God whenever you see it.

to all the people of the land and the priests: When you fasted and lamented in the fifth month and in the seventh, for these seventy years, was it for me that you fasted? ⁶ And when you eat and when you drink, do you not eat and drink only for yourselves? ⁷ Were not these the words that the LORD proclaimed by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, along with the towns around it, and when the Negeb and the Shephelah were inhabited?

Punishment for Rejecting God's Demands

⁸ The word of the LORD came to Zechariah, saying: ⁹ Thus says the LORD of hosts: Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another; ¹⁰ do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another. ¹¹ But they refused to listen, and turned a stubborn shoulder, and stopped their ears in order not to hear. ¹² They made their hearts adamant in order not to hear the law and the words that the LORD of hosts had sent by his spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great wrath came from the LORD of hosts. ¹³ Just as, when I^a called, they would not hear, so, when they called, I would not hear, says the LORD of hosts, ¹⁴ and I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations that they had not known. Thus the land they left was desolate, so that no one went to and fro, and a pleasant land was made desolate.

God's Promises to Zion

8 The word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying: ² Thus says the LORD of hosts: I am jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I am jealous for her with great wrath. ³ Thus says the LORD: I will return to Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; Jerusalem shall be called the faithful city, and the mountain of the LORD of hosts shall be called the holy mountain. ⁴ Thus says the LORD of hosts: Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each with staff in hand because of their great age. ⁵ And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets. ⁶ Thus says the LORD of hosts: Even though it seems impossible to the remnant of this people in these days, should it also seem impossible to me, says the LORD of hosts? ⁷ Thus says the LORD of hosts: I will save my people from the east country and from the west country; ⁸ and I will bring them to live in Jerusalem. They shall be my people and I will be their God, in faithfulness and in righteousness.

⁹ Thus says the LORD of hosts: Let your hands be strong—you that have recently been hearing these

^a Heb *he*

words from the mouths of the prophets who were present when the foundation was laid for the rebuilding of the temple, the house of the LORD of hosts. ¹⁰ For before those days there were no wages for people or for animals, nor was there any safety from the foe for those who went out or came in, and I set them all against one another. ¹¹ But now I will not deal with the remnant of this people as in the former days, says the LORD of hosts. ¹² For there shall be a sowing of peace; the vine shall yield its fruit, the ground shall give its produce, and the skies shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. ¹³ Just as you have been a cursing among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you and you shall be a blessing. Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong.

¹⁴ For thus says the LORD of hosts: Just as I purposed to bring disaster upon you, when your ancestors provoked me to wrath, and I did not relent, says the LORD of hosts, ¹⁵ so again I have purposed in these days to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah; do not be afraid. ¹⁶ These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another, render in your gates judgments that are true and make for

peace, ¹⁷ do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath; for all these are things that I hate, says the LORD.

Joyful Fasting

¹⁸ The word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying: ¹⁹ Thus says the LORD of hosts: The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be seasons of joy and gladness, and cheerful festivals for the house of Judah: therefore love truth and peace.

Many Peoples Drawn to Jerusalem

²⁰ Thus says the LORD of hosts: Peoples shall yet come, the inhabitants of many cities; ²¹ the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, "Come, let us go to entreat the favor of the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts; I myself am going." ²² Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favor of the LORD. ²³ Thus says the LORD of hosts: In those days ten men from nations of every language shall take hold of a Jew, grasping his garment and saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."

Judgment on Israel's Enemies

9

An Oracle.

The word of the LORD is against the land of Hadrach and will rest upon Damascus.

For to the LORD belongs the capital^a of Aram,^b as do all the tribes of Israel;

² Hamath also, which borders on it, Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise.

³ Tyre has built itself a rampart, and heaped up silver like dust, and gold like the dirt of the streets.

⁴ But now, the Lord will strip it of its possessions and hurl its wealth into the sea, and it shall be devoured by fire.

⁵ Ashkelon shall see it and be afraid; Gaza too, and shall writhe in anguish; Ekron also, because its hopes are withered.

^a Heb eye

^b Cn: Heb of Adam (or of humankind)

Read Zechariah 9

God will conquer the surrounding peoples, not by destroying them but by winning over their hearts so that they too will become part of the chosen people.

Reflect: Imagine the world at peace. Imagine a situation in which every living person has what is necessary for a full life. Is it possible?

Pray: Ask God to break down the enmity and greed in our hearts and to use us to bring lasting peace on the earth.

Act: Use your words and hands to bring peace today wherever you go.

The king shall perish from Gaza;
Ashkelon shall be uninhabited;

- 6 a mongrel people shall settle in Ashdod,
and I will make an end of the pride of Philistia.
7 I will take away its blood from its mouth,
and its abominations from between its teeth;
it too shall be a remnant for our God;
it shall be like a clan in Judah,
and Ekron shall be like the Jebusites.
8 Then I will encamp at my house as a guard,
so that no one shall march to and fro;
no oppressor shall again overrun them,
for now I have seen with my own eyes.

The Coming Ruler of God's People

- 9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!
Lo, your king comes to you;
triumphant and victorious is he,
humble and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
10 He^a will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
and the war-horse from Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be cut off,
and he shall command peace to the nations;
his dominion shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.
11 As for you also, because of the blood of my
covenant with you,
I will set your prisoners free from the waterless
pit.
12 Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope;
today I declare that I will restore to you double.
13 For I have bent Judah as my bow;
I have made Ephraim its arrow.
I will arouse your sons, O Zion,
against your sons, O Greece,
and wield you like a warrior's sword.
14 Then the LORD will appear over them,
and his arrow go forth like lightning;
the Lord GOD will sound the trumpet
and march forth in the whirlwinds of the south.
15 The LORD of hosts will protect them,
and they shall devour and tread down the
slingers;^b
they shall drink their blood^c like wine,
and be full like a bowl,
drenched like the corners of the altar.
16 On that day the LORD their God will save them
for they are the flock of his people;

^a Gk: Heb *I*

^b Cn: Heb *the slingers*

^c Gk: Heb *shall drink*

for like the jewels of a crown
they shall shine on his land.

17 For what goodness and beauty are his!

Grain shall make the young men
flourish,
and new wine the young women.

Read Zechariah 10:1—11:3

The leaders of the people, the shepherds, have failed to bring the true word of God to them. Therefore God will punish them and raise up from the people strong and fearless leaders, faithful to God, who will protect the people from evil.

Reflect: How have I contributed to the leadership in my church, in my neighborhood, in my country? Have I myself been strong and fearless? Have I been faithful?

Pray: Ask God to give us faithful and strong leaders in church and society.

Act: Support our leaders through fervent prayer and honest criticism.

Restoration of Judah and Israel

- 10** Ask rain from the LORD
in the season of the spring rain,
from the LORD who makes the storm clouds,
who gives showers of rain to you,^a
the vegetation in the field to everyone.
- 2 For the teraphim^b utter nonsense,
and the diviners see lies;
the dreamers tell false dreams,
and give empty consolation.
Therefore the people wander like sheep;
they suffer for lack of a shepherd.
- 3 My anger is hot against the shepherds,
and I will punish the leaders;^c
for the LORD of hosts cares for his flock, the
house of Judah,
and will make them like his proud war-horse.
- 4 Out of them shall come the cornerstone,
out of them the tent peg,
out of them the battle bow,
out of them every commander.
- 5 Together they shall be like warriors in battle,
trampling the foe in the mud of the streets;
they shall fight, for the LORD is with them,
and they shall put to shame the riders on horses.
- 6 I will strengthen the house of Judah,
and I will save the house of Joseph.
I will bring them back because I have compassion
on them,
and they shall be as though I had not rejected
them;
for I am the LORD their God and I will answer
them.
- 7 Then the people of Ephraim shall become like
warriors,
and their hearts shall be glad as with wine.
Their children shall see it and rejoice,
their hearts shall exult in the LORD.
- 8 I will signal for them and gather them in,
for I have redeemed them,
and they shall be as numerous as they were
before.
- 9 Though I scattered them among the nations,
yet in far countries they shall remember me,
and they shall rear their children and return.

^a Heb *them*

^b Or *household gods*

^c Or *male goats*

10 I will bring them home from the land
of Egypt,
and gather them from Assyria;
I will bring them to the land of
Gilead and to Lebanon,
until there is no room for them.
11 They^a shall pass through the sea of
distress,

and the waves of the sea shall be
struck down,
and all the depths of the Nile dried up.
The pride of Assyria shall be laid low,
and the scepter of Egypt shall depart.
12 I will make them strong in the LORD,
and they shall walk in his name,
says the LORD.

Read Zechariah 11:4–17

The prophet warns that people get the leaders they deserve. The flock that has strayed from God is doomed to slaughter.

Reflect: In what ways might I have empowered leaders—religious, economic, political—who use their position to exploit the vulnerable and enrich themselves?

Pray: Ask God to give you the courage and perseverance to resist corruption in leadership.

Act: Protest the actions of corrupt leaders and work to remove them.

11 Open your doors, O Lebanon,
so that fire may devour your cedars!
2 Wail, O cypress, for the cedar has fallen,
for the glorious trees are ruined!
Wail, oaks of Bashan,
for the thick forest has been felled!
3 Listen, the wail of the shepherds,
for their glory is despoiled!
Listen, the roar of the lions,
for the thickets of the Jordan are destroyed!

Two Kinds of Shepherds

4 Thus said the LORD my God: Be a shepherd of the flock doomed to slaughter. 5 Those who buy them kill them and go unpunished; and those who sell them say, “Blessed be the LORD, for I have become rich”; and their own shepherds have no pity on them. 6 For I will no longer have pity on the inhabitants of the earth, says the LORD. I will cause them, every one, to fall each into the hand of a neighbor, and each into the hand of the king; and they shall devastate the earth, and I will deliver no one from their hand.

7 So, on behalf of the sheep merchants, I became the shepherd of the flock doomed to slaughter. I took two staves; one I named Favor, the other I named Unity, and I tended the sheep. 8 In one month I disposed of the three shepherds, for I had become impatient with them, and they also detested me. 9 So I said, “I will not be your shepherd. What is to die, let it die; what is to be destroyed, let it be destroyed; and let those that are left devour the flesh of one another!” 10 I took my staff Favor and broke it, annulling the covenant that I had made with all the peoples. 11 So it was annulled on that day, and the sheep merchants, who were watching me, knew that it was the word of the LORD. 12 I then said to them, “If it seems right to you, give me my wages; but if not, keep them.” So they weighed out as my wages thirty shekels of silver. 13 Then the LORD said to me, “Throw it into the treasury”^b—this lordly price at which I was valued by them. So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them into the treasury^b in the house of the LORD. 14 Then I

^a Gk: Heb *He*

^b Syr: Heb *it to the potter*

broke my second staff Unity, annulling the family ties between Judah and Israel.

15 Then the LORD said to me: Take once more the implements of a worthless shepherd. ¹⁶ For I am now raising up in the land a shepherd who does not care for the perishing, or seek the wandering,^a or heal the maimed, or nourish the healthy,^b but de-

vours the flesh of the fat ones, tearing off even their hoofs.

¹⁷ Oh, my worthless shepherd,
who deserts the flock!
May the sword strike his arm
and his right eye!

Let his arm be completely withered,
his right eye utterly blinded!

Read Zechariah 12:1—13:1

The prophet uses a variety of mysterious symbols to proclaim the great day of the Lord. The power of all those who come against God's people with evil intent will be destroyed. But this victory will come at a price. God's people will be purified with a fountain of tears shed over those who sacrificed their lives.

Reflect: The martyrs of whom the prophet speaks foreshadow Christ, who sacrificed his life to defeat the evil that threatens us. How does his sacrifice call me to live?

Pray: Ask God to purify your heart so that you may live in the new Jerusalem.

Act: Renew your baptismal promises and seek forgiveness for your failings.

Jerusalem's Victory

12

An Oracle.

The word of the LORD concerning Israel: Thus says the LORD, who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the human spirit within: ² See, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of reeling for all the surrounding peoples; it will be against Judah also in the siege against Jerusalem. ³ On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it shall grievously hurt themselves. And all the nations of the earth shall come together against it. ⁴ On that day, says the LORD, I will strike every horse with panic, and its rider with madness. But on the house of Judah I will keep a watchful eye, when I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness. ⁵ Then the clans of Judah shall say to themselves, "The inhabitants of Jerusalem have strength through the LORD of hosts, their God."

⁶ On that day I will make the clans of Judah like a blazing pot on a pile of wood, like a flaming torch among sheaves; and they shall devour to the right and to the left all the surrounding peoples, while Jerusalem shall again be inhabited in its place, in Jerusalem.

⁷ And the LORD will give victory to the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not be exalted over that of Judah. ⁸ On that day the LORD will shield the inhabitants of Jerusalem so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the LORD, at their head. ⁹ And on that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

Mourning for the Pierced One

¹⁰ And I will pour out a spirit of compassion and supplication on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that, when they look on the one^c whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. ¹¹ On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourn-

^a Syr Compare Gk Vg: Heb *the youth*

^b Meaning of Heb uncertain

^c Heb *on me*

ing for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. ¹² The land shall mourn, each family by itself; the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; ¹³ the fami-

ly of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself, and their wives by themselves; ¹⁴ and all the families that are left, each by itself, and their wives by themselves.

Read Zechariah 13:2-9

The prophet Zechariah suggests that prophecy will come to an end and prophets will be ashamed of their calling. The leaders will fail and the people will be scattered. But a faithful few shall remain.

Reflect: Can I cling to my faith in God even when everything seems to be crumbling around me?

Pray: Ask God for the grace to persevere in good times and bad.

Act: Discuss with a good friend how you can support each other in difficult situations.

13 On that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity.

Idolatry Cut Off

² On that day, says the LORD of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no more; and also I will remove from the land the prophets and the unclean spirit. ³ And if any prophets appear again, their fathers and mothers who bore them will say to them, “You shall not live, for you speak lies in the name of the LORD”; and their fathers and their mothers who bore them shall pierce them through when they prophesy. ⁴ On that day the prophets will be ashamed, every one, of their visions when they prophesy; they will not put on a hairy mantle in order to deceive, ⁵ but each of them will say, “I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the soil; for the land has been my possession^a since my youth.” ⁶ And if anyone asks them, “What are these wounds on your chest?”^b the answer will be “The wounds I received in the house of my friends.”

The Shepherd Struck, the Flock Scattered

⁷ “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is my associate,” says the LORD of hosts.

Strike the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered;

I will turn my hand against the little ones.

⁸ In the whole land, says the LORD, two-thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one-third shall be left alive.

⁹ And I will put this third into the fire, refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested.

They will call on my name, and I will answer them.

I will say, “They are my people”; and they will say, “The LORD is our God.”

^a Cn: Heb for humankind has caused me to possess

^b Heb wounds between your hands

Read Zechariah 14

Terrible disasters will be followed by God's glorious victory over every threat against faithful people. Then God's people will live in joy and everything they touch will be as sacred as vessels of the altar.

Reflect: How have I experienced the peace that follows God's victory over the evil that has threatened me?

Pray: Ask God for patience and courage as you await the coming kingdom.

Act: Strive to be mindful of treating everything you use as sacred to the Lord.

Future Warfare and Final Victory

14 See, a day is coming for the LORD, when the plunder taken from you will be divided in your midst. ² For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses looted and the women raped; half the city shall go into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. ³ Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. ⁴ On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives, which lies before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley; so that one half of the Mount shall withdraw northward, and the other half southward. ⁵ And you shall flee by the valley of the LORD's mountain,^a for the valley between the mountains shall reach to Azal;^b and you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of King Uzziah of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.

⁶ On that day there shall not be^c either cold or frost.^d ⁷ And there shall be continuous day (it is known to the LORD), not day and not night, for at evening time there shall be light.

⁸ On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea; it shall continue in summer as in winter.

⁹ And the LORD will become king over all the earth; on that day the LORD will be one and his name one.

¹⁰ The whole land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. But Jerusalem shall remain aloft on its site from the Gate of Benjamin to the place of the former gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine presses. ¹¹ And it shall be inhabited, for never again shall it be doomed to destruction; Jerusalem shall abide in security.

¹² This shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the peoples that wage war against Jerusalem: their flesh shall rot while they are still on their feet; their eyes shall rot in their sockets, and their tongues shall rot in their mouths. ¹³ On that day a great panic from the LORD shall fall on them, so that each will seize the hand of a neighbor, and the hand of the one will be raised against the hand of the other; ¹⁴ even Judah will fight at Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be collected—gold, silver, and garments in great abundance. ¹⁵ And a plague like this plague shall fall on the horses, the mules, the camels, the donkeys, and whatever animals may be in those camps.

¹⁶ Then all who survive of the nations that have

^a Heb *my mountains*

^b Meaning of Heb uncertain

^c Cn: Heb *there shall not be light*

^d Compare Gk Syr Vg Tg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the festival of booths.^a

¹⁷ If any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain upon them. ¹⁸ And if the family of Egypt do not go up and present themselves, then on them shall^b come the plague that the LORD inflicts on the nations that do not go up to keep the festival of booths.^a ¹⁹ Such shall be the punishment of Egypt and the pun-

ishment of all the nations that do not go up to keep the festival of booths.^a

²⁰ On that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, "Holy to the LORD." And the cooking pots in the house of the LORD shall be as holy as^c the bowls in front of the altar; ²¹ and every cooking pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be sacred to the LORD of hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and use them to boil the flesh of the sacrifice. And there shall no longer be traders^d in the house of the LORD of hosts on that day.

^a Or *tabernacles*; Heb *succoth*

^b Gk Syr: Heb *shall not*

^c Heb *shall be like*

^d Or *Canaanites*